

YOU

“Pilot”

Written by

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Based on the novel “YOU” by

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OVER BLACK:

The TING of a SHOP DOORBELL as a customer walks in.

FADE IN:

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED BOOKS - DAY

POV THROUGH SHELVES: a customer enters. We see only a sliver of her as we track her through the stacks in the POV of a WATCHER we haven't seen yet. JOE. (And we'll stay entirely in POV shots for a while, so get comfy.) We hear Joe's wry, intrigued VO.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Well, hello there.

She's 20s, messenger bag slung over casual clothes. Hair up; bangles rattle on her wrist. This is GUINEVERE BECK.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Who are you? Based on the bag, student. With a random job or two. Got the eyeliner perfect in the mirror this morning but your hair you put up on the train and you don't care if it's crooked. Which is a good look. Not caring too much.

We TRACK with the SOUND of her STEPS. Catch GLIMPSES as she moves through the store scanning shelves.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Your sweater's loose. You're not here to be ogled. But those bracelets jangle. You like a little attention. Okay, I bite.

She fades into the stacks.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I watch you search the books-- Fiction F-K-- now you're not the standard insecure nymph hunting for Faulkner you'll never finish. Too sunkissed for Stephen King. Too untrendy for Heidi Julavits. *Who will you buy?*

She accidentally jostles a passing CUSTOMER.

BECK

Oh-- sorry.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Your voice is sweet, apologetic, like
you're embarrassed to be a good girl --
And you murmur your first word to me.

We come around a corner-- and she's standing in the
center of the aisle, **staring right at us.**

BECK

Hello.

Finally, we see him: JOE GOLDBERG, late 20s, hefting a
load of re-shelves. Unassuming vibe. You wouldn't guess
the tone of his internal V.O. from looking at him.

BECK (CONT'D)

Do you work here?

JOE

Guilty. Help you find something?

BECK

Aren't essays usually in non-fiction?

JOE

Usually. But the owner has his own way
of doing things. Who're you looking for?

BECK

Paula Fox.

JOE

Good choice.

BECK

I feel weirdly validated.

JOE

Follow me.

ANOTHER AISLE, MOMENTS LATER

Joe leads, Beck in tow.

JOE (CONT'D)

Most of her stuff went out of print years
ago. But since Franzen started talking
her up, we've been getting more requests.
We keep her here--

BECK

(reading the sign)
"Celebrity authors?" I thought Fox was
pretty obscure.

JOE

She's Courtney Love's maternal grandmother. You're not expected to know that.

BECK

Good. I didn't.

JOE

Mr. Mooney wants anyone in here that's even tangentially famous. Thinks it sells more books.

BECK

That's sad. People buying books because of what's popular and not because they want to be moved or changed in some way.

JOE

It's an epidemic. See that guy --

Joe whispers conspiratorially, nodding his head toward a MIDDLE-AGED BROOKLYNITE right out of central casting.

JOE (CONT'D)

Grabbed Dan Brown's latest on his way in. Now he'll walk around for another five, ten minutes try and find something legitimate to buy with it.

BECK

(gets it)

Like the cereal guys buy when they're really there for condoms. Only makes it more conspicuous. Like own your shit. If Dan Brown's your kink, be out about it.

Joe smiles. Almost a little shy for this kind of talk.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

And if I wasn't sure before now I know -- you're flirting with me.

They watch the MIDDLE-AGED BROOKLYNITE barely look at a book. Tosses it on his stack. Beck reacts.

BECK

He's totally shame-buying Dan Brown. At the end of the day people really are disappointing aren't they?

JOE

Sometimes they surprise you.

Beck turns back, and for the first time, really looks at Joe. He breaks her gaze -- reminding her and us:

JOE (CONT'D)

Paula Fox, there, top shelf. Want me to--

BECK

Nope I got it.

Beck stands on her tippy-toes to reach for Paula Fox. As she reaches, her breasts push through her sweater.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Are you not wearing a bra? And you want me to notice. If this was a movie I'd grab you and we'd-- right in the stacks in the moonlight. But it's daytime. And I'm wearing an apron with a nametag.

Beck lands back on her feet. Book in hand.

JOE

Have you read her fiction?

BECK

Western Coast. Twice.

JOE

Desperate Characters is her best --

BECK

That's what I keep hearing.

JOE

You haven't read *Desperate Characters*?

BECK (CONT'D)

I know, I know. I was worried it wouldn't live up to the hype so I haven't-- is that weird --

JOE

Why I've never watched *The Wire*. Like it can't be *that* good.

BECK

I've never watched *The Wire*. But I tell people I did cause I don't want to be judged.

JOE

I've actually read *Desperate Characters* and I can safely say, it is that good.

BECK

That's a pretty high endorsement. And from a bookstore clerk nonetheless.

JOE

Hey, that's bookstore manager.

MIDDLE-AGED BROOKLYNITE

Helloooo? Anyone working here?

Reverie broken, Joe looks over. The MIDDLE-AGED BROOKLYNITE is at the counter now. Looking miffed.

JOE

Just a second, sir.

(back to)

Sorry, I have to --

BECK

Help a rude customer.

(calls out)

Enjoy that Dan Brown motherfucker!

The Brooklynite looks away, caught. Beck smirks at Joe who just laughs as he walks down the aisle.

BY THE COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Joe rings the Brooklynite, refusing to be hurried. Behind Joe, a glass wall to an office. Within, ETHAN, 20s, sloppy, bighearted, works. He can see everything.

MIDDLE-AGED BROOKLYNITE

Do you mind, I'm in a hurry.

Joe looks down at the Dan Brown and a paperback *Franny and Zooey* as he rings the man up.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

He's just pissed he's gotta buy Salinger to feel respectable when all he really wants to do is sit eating Cheetos with one hand and jerking it to Pornhub with the other before washing it all down with a Dan Brown chaser.

JOE

You have a nice day, sir.

The man grumbles, exits. Beck approaches with the book she came for, and *Desperate Characters*.

BECK

Okay, I'm going for it.

JOE

You won't regret it.

BECK

I better not.

ETHAN enters with a fresh roll of receipt paper.

ETHAN

Paula Fox. Nice. You know she was
Courtney Love's maternal grandmother.

BECK

That's why I'm buying it.

She gives Joe a playful look, hands over a credit card.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You have enough cash to cover this but
you want me to know your name.

JOE

Guinevere.

BECK

Yeah my parents were assholes with the
naming. Everyone just calls me Beck.
(off his nametag)
And you're Joe...

JOE

Goldberg. But everyone calls me Joe.

They shake hands, touching for the first time.

BECK

Aren't you gonna tell me to have a nice
day?

JOE

You have a nice day, Beck.

BECK

You have one yourself, Joe.

And with one last smile, Beck leaves. Joe studies the
receipt, carefully thumbing her signature.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You smiled at me, laughed at my jokes,
told me your name, asked for mine.

When she's gone, Ethan looks over, re: the receipt.

ETHAN

She write her number on there?

JOE

No.

ETHAN

I'm surprised. She was gaming you hard.

JOE

Naah. She was just being nice.

ETHAN

I'd be googling the hell out of her right now, you know her full name--

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Wow, thanks, never would've thought of Google, you cheesy, ferret-faced box of stupid.

JOE

(friendly and sheepish)

That's pretty aggressive.

ETHAN

What do I tell you, it's Glengarry Glenn Ross-- Always Be Closing that shit. If you need me--

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I'll be in cookbooks. But for work. Not for fun. I swear. Ha.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I'll be in cookbooks. But for work. Not for fun. I swear. Ha.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

At the end of the day people are really just disappointing, aren't they?

Joe eyes the work computer on the counter.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

But are you, Beck? Are you?

Joe looks out the window. He can see BECK in the DISTANCE, heading down to the subway. Off Joe's eyes...

FADE TO TITLE:

Y O U

FADE TO:

EXT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - NIGHT

Joe locks up. He sees a walking couple STOP to KISS.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Yes, people find happiness. They find The One. I believe in that. I try to stay open. I was in love once. She broke my heart, Beck. The last one, she really did a number on me.

EXT. NY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Joe walks home. In his thoughts, as couples and singles, wisecracking packs of boys, young women texting, wistful girls with headphones on, move past him.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You could say I'm surprised I'm standing. In many ways though, it was my fault. I should've seen the signs. They were blatant. But we never do. See the signs. When we're in love.

Joe walks into a TAKEOUT ITALIAN PLACE.

EXT. RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD (NAME TO FOLLOW) - NIGHT

Joe heads to his unamazing apartment building, carrying the takeout bag. He looks up-- and in the second story window, he spots a COUPLE FIGHTING, LOUD.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Exhibit A: Claudia and Ron. Claudia's a nurse and a single parent. You think she knew Ron was an alcoholic shitbag when she fell in love? No. She thought he was a prince on a goddamn horse.

INT. HALLWAY OF JOE'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Joe climbs the stairs and sees PACO (eleven, skinny, sweet and extra bright) sitting against the paint chipped wall, reading an old copy of *The Three Musketeers*.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

And now, hers is not the only life she ruined --

JOE

Hey, Paco.

PACO

Sup, Joe.

More YELLING inside. Something is thrown, it SHATTERS.

JOE
Everything cool in there?

PACO
Yeah. My Mom and Ron are just talking.

Talking? Joe follows Paco's lead, pretending it's not what it really is. Looks to the novel on Paco's lap.

JOE
You're almost done with that book? You just started three days ago?

PACO
Reads quick. With all the swordfights, never gets boring.

JOE
(impressed)
Lemme know when you finish. I'll toss you another one.

Joe's about to go inside but gives one more glance to the angelic, hungry looking eleven year old.

JOE (CONT'D)
You hungry? I got this meatball wedge and then I remembered I have Thai leftover from last night and suddenly I'm not in the mood for Italian anymore.

Paco's eyes say how hungry he is. Still, he declines.

PACO
Nah. My mom'll make me something later.

JOE
It's a shame. Meatball wedges don't keep. This shit's getting tossed.

PACO
You sure, Joe?

JOE
All for one and one for all.

Joe hands over the wedge, smiling. Paco snatches the bag, digging in before Joe even enters his apartment.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A mix of vintage furniture contrasted with unruly piles of books. Joe enters, crosses to the kitchen, looks inside the empty fridge. Notably, no Thai takeout.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

The point, Beck, love isn't just tricky, it's a trick. A guy needs to protect himself. I had to be sure you're safe. Your name was a glorious place to start.

LATER. JOE finishes some peanut butter and saltines out of a sleeve. He sits in front of an elderly Macbook.

ONSCREEN. A search box. Joe types in GUINEVERE BECK.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

There's not a lot of Guinevere Becks.

A host of sites come up: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, etc. He begins to CLICK and SCROLL (*this SOCIAL MEDIA MONTAGE will be a signature of the series*).

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

There you were. Every account set to public. You want to be seen. Heard. Known. Of course I obliged.

PHOTOS COME at us fast, as we move through this collage of BECK'S LIFE from CHILDHOOD to the WOMAN she is today.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Born and raised, Nantucket Island. A brother Clyde and a sister Anya-- your parents really were assholes about the names. Dad died when you were in high school. Heart attack according to the local papers. Anya and Clyde stayed, you escaped.

MORE PHOTOS. College life, drinking with FRIENDS, concerts on meadows, tailgates, beach days with BOYS.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Left to study at Brown where you majored in lit and minored in douchebags.

MORE PHOTOS. Beck in the city, doing yoga, reading lit.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Then on to NYC to conquer a Columbia MFA, and make your mark. You still write. Barely. Too busy living out moments you won't remember five years from now. I know this because you post about this life All The Fucking Time.

EXT. THE HIGHLINE - ANOTHER NIGHT

Beck and SOME GIRL FRIENDS WE'LL MEET SOON, happy-tipsy and carrying a wine bottle in a brown paper bag.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Candidly, it's the least appealing thing about you, Beck.

Beck is drawn to the edge, peering out. A FRIEND (LYNN, Asian-American, just pretty/smart/rich enough to slide by in life, affects a perpetual bored deadpan) calls to her--

LYNN

Hurry up, Beck, we told them we'd be there an hour ago.

Beck types a Tweet on her phone. We hear HER VOICE:

BECK'S VOICE

"We are t-minus-ten to karaoke Katy Perry. This is your final warning, humans with ears."

INT. THE SUBWAY - EARLIER THAT DAY

Beck on the subway right after meeting Joe.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You posted this hours after our encounter.

She looks down at the book cover of *Desperate Characters*, SNAPS a PICTURE for INSTA, types:

BECK'S VOICE

Most of my favorite people are books.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Joe studies the Instagram. Almost offended.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

For a second I was concerned you didn't mention that cute guy in the bookstore.

He scans THROUGH more PICTURES. We do too. A super fast SLIDESHOW of A YOUNG HAPPY-GO-LUCKY GIRL IN THE CITY.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Then I realized, your online life isn't real, it's an artistic collage and you want it all to seem so carefree.

(MORE)

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

So you paste this Beck up everywhere,
this together, lovable, cute, bendy
creature.

Joe stops on ONE PHOTO in particular. Beck and Lynn in
front of a BUILDING SHOVING a COUCH up the STAIRS.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

If anything, the fact that you didn't
share me with your followers only
confirms we really connected.

Joe COPIES AND PASTES A PHOTO into A SEARCH ENGINE. He
searches IMAGES. Something comes up. He smiles.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

The next thing our friend the internet
gave me was your address.

REVEAL the SCREEN is a CLEAR PICTURE OF A BUILDING in the
West Village. The address listed right below.

EXT. 51 BANK STREET - DAY

On a real life shot of the SAME BUILDING FROM THE PHOTO.

ACROSS THE STREET

Joe stands, tucked unobtrusively by a stoop with a big
brick staircase. You'd walk right by without noticing.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

There it is, with its big naked windows.

From across the street, Joe has a private, relatively
UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW of the slightly elevated FIRST FLOOR
APARTMENT. Windows are uncovered. *Everything on view.*

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Definitely more than you could afford.
I'm thinking subsidized school housing.

BECK walks by, NAKED except for a towel.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Jesus, Beck. It's like you've never seen
a horror movie. Or the news.

Joe looks around at the PEDESTRIANS coming and going
outside. They stroll past, not seeming to care.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

But you want people to watch, don't you?
I plan on asking you about this quality
when we get to know each other better.

Inside Beck heats a microwaveable dish for dinner. Takes out her phone, scrolls while she eats. Types something.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

A proposal. Why don't we spend the day
together tomorrow. Just you and me?

As if on cue, Joe's PHONE CHIRPS alerting him to a TWEET:

BECK'S VOICE

*To everyone out there chasing their
dreams, don't give up. And in the
meantime, Mac N Cheese!*

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Okay, Beck. It's a date.

INT. A THRIFT SHOP - AFTERNOON

Joe ruffles through an ASSORTMENT of SECOND HAND CLOTHES--
some blue collar, some higher-end. He's on the phone...

INTERCUT ETHAN at the bookstore stacking some shelves.

ETHAN

Duuude, I hope you don't have what I had.

JOE

(into phone, fake exhaustion)
I think I do.

ETHAN

It's an Ethiopian superstrain. It does
like a dual *Do I have to shit or puke?*
Sophie's Choice thing. Also, there's an
amazing veggie soup in Gwyneth Paltrow's
cookbook, *Notes From My Kitchen Table*.
Cleared me right up, I can make you some.

JOE

No, I can't risk getting you sick, too.

BY THE COUNTER, Joe finishes, hangs up, drops his
purchases in front of the MATRONLY CLERK.

MATRONLY CLERK

You an actor or something?

JOE
How did you know?

Joe takes his bag and exits.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Is everyone in this city a fucking moron,
Beck? Rhetorical.

MUSIC UP: A romantic Parisian style bal musette plays as
we begin a MONTAGE OF JOE STALKING BECK for the day...

OUTSIDE BECK'S APARTMENT

Joe watches, dressed in his first THRIFTY GETUP (80's
track suit, Yankees cap), a backpack over his shoulder.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Our day starts at the ass crack of dawn.
I know from your posted schedule that you
teach a 6:30 class called Get Up N Flow.

IN HER APARTMENT

Beck hurriedly preps for her day, drinking coffee...

INSIDE A YOGA STUDIO

Beck teaches a class to A BUNCH of MIDDLE AGED WHITE
PEOPLE. REVEAL Joe across the street, watching her.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
You caress the sweaty backs of bulimic,
dead-eyed Real Mommies Of Soho whose
haircuts cost your rent. Offering smiles
and lies of encouragement.

Beck adjusts TASHA, who is, let us say, not good at yoga.

BECK
I'm loving your form today, Tasha.

ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS

ON BECK racing across the lawn. Reveal JOE, DRESSED as a
STUDENT pretending to talk into his phone.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
By ten you're at campus to TA a Romantics
Class and play Vanna White to some shirt.

She catches UP with PROFESSOR LEAHY (50's and gross but
thinks he's 30's and hip).

BECK
Morning, Professor Leahy.

PROFESSOR LEAHY
I told you, it's Paul. Wouldn't want
students thinking I was like those other
stuffy tenured assholes now would we?

He drapes an arm around Beck. She reacts only slightly.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Professor Obvious wants to fuck you.
You're smart. You let him think one day
he might. What's the harm in that, right?

They enter the building, bringing us to...

A DINER OFF UNION SQUARE

Inside WAITING TABLES is a tireless BECK. She moves
effortlessly, like a dancer, between rushed CUSTOMERS.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
By lunch you're at your second job.

We SEE JOE through the glass. He's across the street on
a bench (dressed BLUE-COLLAR, now) eating a sandwich.

LATER

Back inside, shift complete, Beck now sits at a corner
booth. Laptop out. Trying to write.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
After your shift, you hide in the corner
and try to write for the first time all
day. But your life doesn't cooperate.

Her phone starts BUZZING with TEXTS and alerts. Fuck.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Your wealthy girlfriends have just now
woken up and have nothing better to do
than text emojis and like each other's
drunk selfies from the night before.

Beck relents, closing her laptop and texting back...

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Can we get real for a second? You have
shitty taste in friends, Beck.

A PRICEY RETAIL STORE IN SOHO

Beck chats up a SALESWOMAN, checking out \$3,000 handbags.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And expensive taste in lives.

There's JOE gazing through the window, seeing BECK STEALTHILY SNIP the TAG off a McQueen scarf, pocket it. With unhurried shoplifter grace, she heads out....

OUTSIDE THE STORE

Beck dashes for it. Right past Joe, invisible to her.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

You want so badly to be one of them.

AN UPSCALE EATERY IN THE VILLAGE

Warmly lit table of LAUGHING, DRINKING GIRLS. Including BECK, birthday friend CHANA (carefree party-instigator; loud laugh, sexy extra few pounds), LYNN, and queen bee PEACH (imperiously skinny, moneyed, confident). Chana is opening a present: The SCARF Beck stole. Everyone coos.

BECK

Do you like it?

CHANA

No, I hate it. *Of course I fucking love it, Beckish!*

BECK

Cause you can always return it --

REVEAL JOE sitting at a nearby TABLE. METS CAP ON, facing AWAY from them, pretending to read a book.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Bold one, Beck. Color me impressed.

CHANA

Please! I said I love it-- I mean it.

PEACH

Jason didn't even get her something that nice and Chana finally let him do anal.

The GROUP LAUGHS. Chana semi-playfully smacks Peach.

PEACH (CONT'D)

Please. Open my gift next and see how much you hate me then lady.

Chana does. It's a NECKLACE with a DIAMOND encrusted DOLPHIN. The GROUP coos. Beck slouches, her moment in the sun already eclipsed.

CHANA

A dolphin! It's my spirit animal for the year. You remembered.

PEACH

Only because you won't shut up about it. Here let me put it on you.

LYNN

Okay so how much anal is Peach getting?

CHANA

Whenever she wants! Where's your strap-on, Peach?

PEACH

At least I'll use lube honey.

More LAUGHS from the GROUP. Joe grimaces.

OUTSIDE THE CAFE

Just after. The group says goodbyes. They beg BECK to go out with them. But she resists.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

They've got nothing to do after this. So yeah, they'll party till five and scrape it together tomorrow. You can't.

Joe, pretending to check his phone, exits the restaurant as Lynn and Chana peel off in one direction.

PEACH

I'll catch up, guys.

Peach lingers with Beck. She pulls CIGARETTES OUT. Joe leans against a wall, scrolling his phone-- anonymous. You'd never spot him. Peach lights a cigarette, waves smoke away, all business.

PEACH (CONT'D)

A McQueen scarf, Beck? How much was it?

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Huh. Maybe not all your friends are dumb.

BECK

...it was on clearance.

PEACH

They haven't put a McQueen scarf on clearance since he hung himself in 2010.

(MORE)

PEACH (CONT'D)

It would be too much for you to pay even if she deserved it. Which God knows she does not.

Peach watches Beck try to shrug this off, uncomfortable.

PEACH (CONT'D)

How broke are you?

Beck's taken aback by the direct question.

BECK

I'm okay. Really.

PEACH (CONT'D)

Just tell me what's up.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Actually sounds like she cares.

BECK

Look, I appreciate--

PEACH

Beck. Why don't you just let me loan you some cash? I keep telling you, I literally have three trust funds, all from relatives I hated, you'd be doing me a favor. How much do you need?

JOE'S THOUGHTS

If only she didn't also sound so condescending.

BECK

Zero, Peach. But if I ever do--

PEACH

You better ask.

Peach smooths Beck's hair, a sisterly gesture.

PEACH (CONT'D)

Can't have you run yourself into the ground, you're my only friend I actually like. Don't strand me here with those dumb bitches, I swear to god.

Beck laughs out loud. Now, Peach, takes Beck's hand.

PEACH (CONT'D)

I'd do anything for you. Don't forget that.

Beck looks down at Peach's hand in hers, and for a split second, it suddenly feels just the tiniest hair... weird. Peach casually withdraws her hand. Moment over.

PEACH (CONT'D)

Sure you don't wanna come out with us?

BECK

I gotta write.

PEACH

Virtuous. Catch you later?

They share a 100% standard girl-buddy hug, and Peach heads off like the low-key Queen Of NYC she is.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

So is that the best friend you've got? If so, Beck, you really are alone.

FINALLY, BACK AT BECK'S PLACE

Her window ILLUMINATES as she enters for the night. Pulls off her shirt and flops on the couch in her bra.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Your social media's a liar. It says you're a happy-go-lucky dilettante.

Beck nurses a Diet Coke, immerses herself in her writing.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

But you seem like the genuine article.

OUTSIDE

Beck focuses on her work. When-- Her CELL BUZZES. She checks a text. Hesitates. Unsure whether to answer.

An attractive late 20's HIPSTER TYPE in expensive but unkempt clothes breezes past Joe. This is BENJI.

Joe falls back into the shadows, pretends to immerse himself in his phone. He watches Benji dial his cell.

BENJI

(into phone)

C'mon, Beck. I see you in there, your light's on, babe. Let me up!

Through the window, we see Beck finally walk to her door and push the buzzer. Benji smiles, sauntering up the stairs and into her place. Mission accomplished.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Um, Beck, who the fuck is this?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

On Beck pacing and pissed. She's cleaning her place. Barely listening to Benji's half-hearted apology.

BENJI

So that's it, you're not even gonna try to hear my side of it?

BECK

My best friend walked in on you getting your dick sucked by some random woman in a bathroom at a party *I took you to!*

BENJI

It was one skank from Hoboken. I was wasted. And I didn't even finish.

BECK

That's your apology? "I didn't cum."
That's the one you're going with?

BENJI

Okay, listen, I shouldn't have gotten that wasted. And I for sure shouldn't have mixed Adderall, Percocet and three Moscow mules. Trust me, I will never do that again. And obviously I shouldn't have gone into the bathroom with any girl that wasn't you. But I was out of my mind and she said she had good coke and I've been seriously stressed-- I thought when Jono and me started our own line it was gonna be picking flavors and shit, turns out it's sixteen hours of lectures from a smelly Korean chemist on microbial management and filtration. And that's why no one starts their own artisanal soda and why America has to keep drinking crap that's giving them cancer.

A beat as Beck comprehends the entirety of this apology.

BECK

Wow. I was wrong, you actually managed to connect your illicit blow job to curing cancer. I'm genuinely impressed.

ACROSS THE STREET

Joe watches. Circumspect.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Way to go, Beck. Looks like a catch.

Joe's PHONE is out. He SCROLLS THROUGH Beck's Instagram account, with a PICTURE OF BENJI, BECK and FRIENDS in the HAMPTONS. Follows a LINK TO BENJI'S ACCOUNT and...

BEGIN A MONTAGE OF BENJI'S SOCIAL MEDIA. Twitter, Insta, Facebook, etc. (*Again this will be a motif of the show as Joe encounters someone of interest.*)

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Benjamin J. Tuttle the third. Greenwich born, boarding school bred. Then onto Cornell, legacy admission seeing as his father is The Ben Tuttle of Tuttle Brokerage. At least two failed careers since college. Model. Oh boy. And co-creator of a busted dating app that connects people through their musical tastes called LOVENOTEZ. Currently CEO of Home Soda Artisanal Beverages, motto: "drink better by hand," which makes no sense but evokes a homespun quality that lines up well with a guy who wears six-hundred-dollar Japanese sneakers. The hair, the entitlement, the privilege tries to hide with retweets about Black Lives Matter. Not to sound judgmental, Beck, but: this guy is everything wrong with America.

BACK WITH JOE. He looks back at the window. We go...

BACK INSIDE

Benji moves closer. Undeterred.

BECK

Seriously, Benji, I'm drowning in work and I don't have time to keep hooking up or whatever it is you're even capable of.

BENJI

I'm capable of more. Just let me try. Obviously you want to or you wouldn't have let me up.

(gently holds her)

I know I've done some stupid shit, but I'm really on it now. Full-on new leaf. I don't want to be just some guy you sleep with, Beck. I want to see where this goes. Don't you?

We see the hurt finally seep into her eyes.

BECK
You're such a bastard.

BENJI
(whispers in her ear)
God... you make me insane.

Finally, Beck gives in. Kissing him.

BACK WITH JOE

Joe's face is etched in disappointment. Shakes his head, reaches into his knapsack for some chips, as he does...

JOE'S THOUGHTS
This is why I do my research. Here I was about to label you "safe bet" and your biggest red flag is revealed: you fall for the wrong men. Bad men. You let them in. You let them hurt you.

JOE'S VOYEUR POV THROUGH WINDOW: we watch IN CUTS AS BENJI AND BECK ARE ON THE BED HAVING SEX. As it ends:

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Too far away to know for sure but my guess is if he came anywhere close to making you orgasm, you'd've made a Broadway production out of it. But you didn't. 'Cause he didn't.

BACK WITH BECK AND BENJI

Benji sighs contentedly. He kisses Beck and rolls off. Benji grabs for his pants and his VAPE PEN. Turns it on and notices the book sitting there on her nightstand.

BENJI
Desperate Characters.

BECK
I picked it up yesterday. You can borrow it when I'm done, it's supposed to be--

BENJI
(sorry)
Jono's consultant we brought in, she's all over me about that kinda thing-- she saged the shit out of the office. Anyway, the book title has the word "desperate" in it. You don't want to think of yourself as a desperate character, Beck.

She knows he's lecturing her from a pretty silly soapbox, yet the advice still makes her uneasy. It lands. But then, he smiles-- simple, direct--

BENJI (CONT'D)

Because you're the opposite, babe.
You're the smartest girl I know.
Honestly, you blow me away.

Okay. Now we get it-- when Benji actually focuses on a human besides himself, he's irresistible. But the moment evaporates the second he checks his phone, and sees--

BENJI (CONT'D)

Shit. Gotta roll. Jono's blowing up my phone. Hey, maybe you can come by, test the new flavors-- we're doing cumin cause I know how much you love Indian food.

BECK

Sure. Sounds great.

Beck puts a t-shirt on over her naked body.

BENJI

(squeezes her ass)
It looks good on you, by the way. The extra weight.

Benji's on his phone half way out the door.

BENJI (CONT'D)

(into phone)
On my way bro. You guys ordering pizza?
Yeah but not from that vegan place, vegan pizza tastes like stale ass.

Benji's gone. Beck surveys the now empty apartment. She flops down on the couch with her phone. Frustrated. She grabs her remote. Clicks on the TV. Channel surfs.

OUTSIDE

Joe watches.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

He's a bad habit. You know he is, Beck.
You look like you want to apologize to yourself every time you think about him.

BACK INSIDE

Beck turns the TV off. A beat... and her hand slips under her shirt. Eyes slip shut in concentration. Brow furrows. Something lonely, vulnerable about the gesture.

After a second we realize, *she's masturbating.*

OUTSIDE

Joe takes a step back.

JOE
(quietly)
Shit.

He turns away, like he wants to give her privacy. But then... he can't help it. He looks again.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
So you *didn't* finish.

Joe watches with something like tenderness.

FROM JOE'S VOYEUR POV: *Beck pleases herself with the abandon of a girl who thinks she has complete privacy.*

Joe reaches down to adjust what is clearly a hard situation in his pants. He looks around at the empty street. Considers something for a second as we go...

BACK INSIDE

Beck is still on the couch.

Only now Joe is standing above her.

But she doesn't scream. Instead, Beck smiles. Beckoning. Joe removes his shirt, undoes his pants. He climbs atop her. They begin to make love. Beck arches--

BECK
That's right, Joe. Just like that.

That's when THE SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING PULLS US BACK --

ACROSS THE STREET

Where Joe has been masturbating in the shadow of a building.

AN OBLIVIOUS OLDER WOMAN RESIDENT leaving the building has just INTERRUPTED JOE and HIS FANTASY.

Joe buttons his pants. Turns to where the OLDER WOMAN struggles to carry a PIECE OF LUGGAGE down the stairs. Ever the polite boy, Joe sighs, moves to help.

OLDER WOMAN

Thank you. You're so kind. My husband always says there's no nice young people left in New York.

As Joe places the luggage down on the sidewalk --

FROM HIS POV: Beck's done. She's walking away from the couch to get a snack. Joe missed the big moment.

OLDER WOMAN (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you can help me hail a cab. Can you?

JOE

Of course.

Joe glumly raises his hand to flag a CAB. DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOE'S APARTMENT - ESTABLISHING - LATER

Joe trudges up the street. His big day complete.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Something's in the air tonight, Beck, 'cause everyone but me is getting action. Even lovebirds Claudia and Ron made up.

Joe looks up to his NEIGHBOR'S WINDOW where A SHADE is DRAWN but SOUNDS of INTENSE LOVEMAKING emanate.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Their sex is somehow louder than Ron beating the ever-loving shit out of her.

INT. JOE'S BUILDING - STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Joe walks up the landing, he finds PACO on the floor by his door, READING the end of *The Three Musketeers*.

JOE

Don't tell me you're done.

PACO

Finished yesterday. Just rereading the good parts today. I dug it. Tight action, good characters. Sometimes the dialogue is weird though. Like when they're killing each other and still all nice to each other about it.

JOE

Well it was the 19th Century. People still had manners.

PACO

I was hoping we could go get another one?

JOE

It's pretty late, Pac...

They're interrupted by the SOUNDS of PACO'S MOTHER and her BOYFRIEND HAVING SEX.

JOE (CONT'D)

Okay. Sure. Let's go. But only if we get some milkshakes on the way.

Paco lights up, leaps up excitedly and down the stairs in front of Joe, pretending to swordfight, adding:

PACO

"We are men and after all it is our business to risk our lives!"

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - LATER

Joe unlocks the door and they enter. Joe flips on the lights as Paco weaves through the stacks, SLURPING his milkshake and speaking in an adolescent torrent.

PACO

Did you know Dumas was a black dude? I googled him. At school, I'm not allowed to use Ron's computer cause one time I found all these naked women on it. Ron told me it's cause he's learning to paint "the human form" and if I touch his stuff again he would teach me a lesson in respect. Anyway, Dumas' grandmother was a slave and his dad was a Brigadier General in Napoleon's army, he was nicknamed The Black Devil cause this one time he killed like half a battalion, you probably knew that since you work in a bookstore. How'd you get to work here anyway?

Paco arrives at section where Joe scans a shelf.

JOE

Mr. Mooney gave me a job when I was just a little older than you. Sorta took me in.

PACO

He sounds nice. Mr. Mooney.

JOE

He was a dick. But he loved books and he taught me to love them too.

PACO

I never see him here. Is he dead?

JOE

Nope. Just really old. He lives in assisted living.

(can't find it)

Hunh? Must be out.

PACO

Out of what?

JOE

Your next read. I guess Ethan didn't reorder it. C'mon. Follow me. I'll show you where we keep the good stuff.

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lights FLICKER ON, revealing a dimly lit basement stacked with shipping boxes, cleaning supplies and in the middle of it all--

A MASSIVE CAGE-- really, a state-of-the-art SAFE-- a room within the room made of STEEL and PLEXIGLASS carefully constructed to house RARE BOOKS. Paco looks at the structure with more awe than fear.

JOE

The Cage. It's where we keep the early editions and collectibles.

PACO

It's cold.

JOE

Sixty five degrees. Sound proof so that nothing would disturb Mr. Mooney's reading. There's even a toilet so he didn't have to come upstairs to use the bathroom while he was down here.

PACO

If the zombies come, this is where I'm hiding.

Joe unlocks the cage. They enter. Paco walks toward the collectibles. He lovingly RUNS a FINGER over the lucite-encased SPINE of an OLD EDITION when WE HEAR:

MR. MOONEY (O.C.)
Careful, Joseph.

PACO turns and we FLASHBACK TO YEARS EARLIER:

MR. MOONEY (Russian immigrant, 50's) stands over a 14 year old Joe with a home-cut hair and a black eye.

MR. MOONEY (CONT'D)
When it comes to a book's value, it's all about condition. I'll show you.

BACK TO PACO and JOE.

Joe crosses and begins to instruct Paco, and WE INTERCUT BETWEEN them and MR. MOONEY and YOUNG JOE years earlier.

JOE
Always sixty five degrees at all times.
Humidity at 40 percent, if it's too moist
the pages can mildew...

MR. MOONEY
...Too dry, they get brittle. Keep books upright so the spines don't become warped or rolled or what we call "cocked"...

JOE
...You don't want the flaps tucked or creased in any way. We dust the covers once a day with a chemical free duster...

MR. MOONEY
...Always dust toward the spines, so you don't tear or rip the corners...

JOE
...And under no circumstances is there any sunlight in this room...

MR. MOONEY
Sunlight can ruin a book as fast as fire.

JOE
Faster.

MR. MOONEY (CONT'D)
Faster.

PACO
Wow. That's a lot of stuff to remember just to take care of some old books.

Joe leans down close to Paco. The closest he's gotten yet. It should make us feel a little uncomfortable.

JOE

The most valuable things in life, Paco, are usually the most helpless. So they need people like us to watch over them. Protect them. Y'know?

Joe reaches his HAND out TOWARD PACO'S FACE AND... right past him to a GRAB the BOOK he's looking for.

JOE (CONT'D)

Here you go.

PACO

(takes, reads)

The Count of Monte Cristo.

JOE

Considered to be Dumas' best work. It's about revenge. And waiting for what you want, even if it means waiting a really really long time.

Paco holds it respectfully, a little worried.

PACO

I probably shouldn't take this home.

JOE

It's not a first edition, just an old one. And besides, I trust you.

Paco smiles. It's nice to be trusted.

INT. JOE'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATER

Joe and Paco, book under his arm, head up the stairs. RON, Paco's STEP-DAD, stands there waiting. He's pissed.

RON

Where you been, Paco?

PACO

We just grabbed some milkshakes-

RON

Did you ask if you could grab food? Do you walk away with strangers?

PACO

Joe's not--

RON

Yes he is. Go inside. Now.

Paco throws an apologetic look to Joe and heads in.

RON (CONT'D)

Stay away from my girlfriend's kid.

Joe manages to answer calmly--

JOE

Listen, I'm sorry. But he was out here and he could hear everything that was going on *in there*.

RON

Don't tell me how to parent, weirdo. Maybe this works on other people, the whole I'm a sweet, nice guy act. But I'm a parole officer fifteen years and I can see what you are.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Well, you're a fat alcoholic who beats the shit out of your bipolar girlfriend in front of her son. So please, illuminate me, what am I?

RON

You're a freak. You got freak eyes. So you stay the fuck away from Paco, or I take your freak eyes out with a fucking steak knife. Do you understand me you loser piece of shit?

Enough said. Ron heads back inside. Joe stands there.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

There are some scary people in the world, Beck. That's why it's important to be safe.

Finally, he heads to his apartment.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And why I had to do what I did next.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - MID-DAY

Slow day. Joe's looking at the store DESKTOP COMPUTER.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

A few days had passed and still no mention of the nice guy from the bookstore. Had we even connected?

ON THE SCREEN: The latest from Beck's SOCIAL MEDIA. More YOGA pics, tweets about a night out, and even A SELFIE with HER and BENJI making WEIRD FACES into CAMERA.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Maybe you were too busy screwing Benji to notice the real thing when it finally landed in your lap.

Ethan rushes in, backpack over one shoulder--

ETHAN

Joe, sorry I'm late -- Rastiche, my balalaika teacher ran over today. Great guy. Really slow talker.

JOE

It's fine. Drop your stuff and come take over up front.

Ethan disappears into the back. Joe opens GOOGLE...

JOE'S THOUGHTS

There was only one way to know for sure.

He Googles THE GAS COMPANY number... DIALS on his CELL.

JOE

(into cell)

Hi. I'm smelling gas in our apartment?

EXT. BECK'S BUILDING - LATER

... as a GAS COMPANY VAN pulls up in front.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Fun fact: did you know, Beck, the law requires all gas leaks be investigated.

ACROSS THE STREET...

There's Joe. Standing. Watching as the SUPER exits BECK'S BUILDING and greets the GAS COMPANY MAN getting out of the van. They enter the building together.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I was careful to pick a day you had a full schedule. Wouldn't want to scare you.

INT. BECK'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

The SUPER leads a GAS COMPANY MAN to Beck's door--

SUPER

She's at work I think -

GAS COMPANY MAN

Must have called before she left.

The Super pulls out a key ring and UNLOCKS the apartment.

SUPER

Worst lock in the building. Key sticks.
Call when you're done, I'll come lock up.

The Gas Company Man enters Beck's apartment...

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - LATER

The Gas Company man is PACKING UP HIS STUFF when--

JOE (O.C.)

Beck? You left the door open again, I thought we said no more doing that --

Joe enters to see the Gas Man.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey. Beck here?

GAS COMPANY MAN

Nope--

JOE

Oh.
(polite but firm)
Did she let you in?

GAS COMPANY MAN

Her Super did. Someone reported a leak.

JOE

She mentioned something this morning.
Everything okay?

GAS COMPANY MAN

Yeah, all clear now-- tell your
girlfriend there's no leak. I'm done, so-

JOE

Great. Thanks. I can lock up.

Gas Company Man shrugs, picks up his stuff, heads out.
Leaving Joe alone among Beck's every worldly possession.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Where is it, Beck? Holder of all
secrets. Your laptop.

A SERIES OF CUTS: JOE delicately rummages through her
place. Starts at the couch. Searches in and under it.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

When we live together, your place won't
be a pig sty. I'll clean for us.

CUT TO: Joe stops at a table, where Beck left DIRTY
TUPPERWARE.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And you won't eat all this frozen shit.
I'll cook for you every day. Promise.

CUT TO: Joe lifts a pair of PANTIES off the dresser.
Holds them tenderly in his hand. Pockets them.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I'll even do your laundry.

CUT TO: A shelf stacked with DOG-EARED COPIES of BOOKS.
Joe examines the AUTHORS, opens ONE, flips through it.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And take care of your favorite books.
Especially the poets you seem to love.

CUT TO: Beck's unmade bed. Joe hovers, checks out the
dent in the pillow. Gently, he pulls back the covers.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I'll make our bed every morning.

And there it is: BECK'S LAPTOP.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And *no matter how hard you fight me...*

Joe grabs the computer and sits on the bed. Opens it up.
And sure enough, IT BLINKS RIGHT ON.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

...I will always make sure you password
protect your devices.

Joe is now freely SEARCHING ACROSS all Beck's files.

PHOTOBOOTH is open. Joe inspects A STREAM of PRIVATE
SELFIES. A girl trying to figure out what her best
angles are, what looks sexy. In some, she's TOPLESS.

PROFESSOR LEAHY (PRE-LAP)

*One day you won't need love anymore, you
won't walk through the world as though it
was your job to hold everything up, the
sun, the sky, the hard part of night...*

INT. PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - AROUND THE SAME TIME

Where we find it's PROFESSOR LEAHY reading. He leans
back in a chair, the afternoon sun casts a dusty glow.

PROFESSOR LEAHY

*...You loved him the way fragile kids
love gorgeous bullies. You wrote poems
about him. You still write poems about
him. You're writing one right now.*

REVEAL BECK sitting opposite. Smiling expectantly.

PROFESSOR LEAHY (CONT'D)

It's good. Quite good. Sincerely.

BECK

(a sigh of relief)

I struggled with the form more than I
thought I would.

PROFESSOR LEAHY

But Beck-- Where are we on your thesis?
You owe me pages.

BECK

I've been-- honestly, working every day,
and grading papers--

PROFESSOR LEAHY

Look, if the schedule is too rigorous,
drop back to part time.

BECK

But then I won't qualify to TA-- I need the cash. And the housing. I'd lose my place-

An edge is creeping into her voice. He hears it. Calmly-

PROFESSOR LEAHY

I'm sure you'll figure that out-- you're smart or you wouldn't be here.

BECK

Please, Professor Leahy --

PROFESSOR LEAHY (CONT'D)

Paul.

BECK

Paul. I'll get you pages by the end of the week. I can't go to part time, okay.

He sits back. Sighs. Takes her in.

PROFESSOR LEAHY

I'm rooting for you, Beck. The poems are good. They're just not going to earn you a degree. It is what it is. But I also happen to think with work your poetry could be something. I'm happy to discuss those further as well. After class some evening.

So casual, Beck could almost believe he isn't hitting on her. *Is he?*

PROFESSOR LEAHY (CONT'D)

If we're going to seriously discuss poetry, it should be over a drink. Thursday? There's a small gastropub in the Bowery I love. Hidden away from all this madness.

Okay, yeah, Professor Leahy is definitely DTF.

BECK

I would love that, Paul. It's just... how would your wife feel about--

PROFESSOR LEAHY

About me helping out an aspiring writer? She's used to my generosity.

Beck swallows her dignity and produces a slight smile.

PROFESSOR LEAHY (CONT'D)

So. Thursday night then?

BECK
Thursday night it is.

PROFESSOR LEAHY
Excellent. Don't worry about class the next few days, go home and get caught up. I'll cover here in the meantime.

Beck retains her composure, gathers her bag and exits.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
So I learned three definitive things by scouring your computer, Beck...

EXT. CAMPUS - OUTSIDE LEAHY'S OFFICE - DAY

As Beck walks from Leahy's office amongst the SEA of STUDENTS. She's clearly upset by her Leahy encounter.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
First, your dad didn't die of a heart attack. He OD'ed and you were the one that found him. This explains your royally fucked up relationship with men.

Beck starts TO TEXT someone. As she does WE SEE THE TEXT APPEAR AS A CHYRON as she types it, and we hear:

BECK'S VOICE
I need to see you tonight.

REVEAL her PHONE SCREEN. It's a CHAT with BENJI. Beck anxiously awaits his text back.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Second, you're *really* swept up in this Benji insanity. You text him incessantly. You write poems about him. Good poems. But he could care less about you. His texts are a series of noncommittal words mixed with compliments meant to keep you hanging on.

PING. Benji TEXTS back. We READ and HEAR:

BENJI'S VOICE
Will if I can babe. Working late.

A second later, another PING--

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

And now we're with Joe as he sees these same texts come up REAL TIME in a box on her computer--

BENJI'S VOICE

PS. I still smell like your pussy. ;)

Off Joe's unimpressed face--

EXT. CAMPUS - OUTSIDE LEAHY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Back to Beck, who looks happy enough for the meager attention. She pockets her phone. Continues walking.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

But none of this matters because of my third and greatest discovery...

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

JOE'S lying comfortably on BECK'S BED now, reading her COMPUTER and SMILING the WIDEST SMILE we've seen yet.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

February 5th, 11:06 AM, an hour after our encounter at the bookstore, amidst a group text with friends about the merits of vaginal detoxing, you wrote:

On the SCREEN. In her CHAT HISTORY:

BECK'S VOICE

Wow. Just met a human male who actually reads. Alert the media.

(and then)

What if it's finally time for me to date someone good for me?

There it is. For Joe this is the ultimate confirmation.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Thank you for letting me know I wasn't crazy after all.

In a moment of sheer enthusiasm he does a silent cheer.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I was so excited I almost didn't hear your key in the door.

SUDDENLY there is the SOUND of A LOCK. The FRONT DOOR. Luckily for Joe THE LOCK STICKS (worst in the building).

Joe carefully CLOSES the COMPUTER, buries it in sheets.

BECK (O.C.)

Yes I remember what you said when you sent money last time. Yes I'm grateful.

BECK walks into the bedroom, kicking off shoes, on cell.

REVEAL the WHOLE ROOM. Joe's gone. Phew.

BECK (CONT'D)

(into phone)

...I'm working constantly. No, I've looked, there's no place cheaper to live.

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Joe looks for a window, no luck. Quietly, he steps into the shower, painstakingly pulls the curtain shut.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I wasn't worried. I've seen enough romantic comedies to know guys like me are always getting in jams like this.

Beck walks into the bathroom, still on the phone--

BECK

I did and he basically offered to sleep with me. No, I can't report him, that's not how it works. Not the school, the world. That's not how the world works.

Beck reaches through the still-closed curtain, and turns on the water. Joe's HIT BY ICY SPRAY, can't make a sound.

BECK (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I know this was all my choice. I know how much you've helped me, it's just-- hard here. Harder than I thought.

As she listens, she deflates. It's a no. Quietly--

BECK (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I'll figure it out. I gotta go. Talk to you this weekend-- Oh right, when you get back from the cruise. Have fun with Aunt Donna. Tell her I said hi. Bye, Mom.

Beck HANGS UP. She's standing at the mirror taking in her whole day, week, life. And she begins TO CRY.

Beck meets her own eyes in the mirror, grips the sink. Really crying now. Shower pelting him, Joe listens.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

(softly)

It's okay, Beck.

He raises a hand, as if to send consolation. Looks like she might get in the shower and end this whole pilot when-

HER FACETIME BUZZES.

Beck answers. LYNN and PEACH ON SCREEN. Having fun.

LYNN (ON SCREEN)

BITCH, where are you at, come play!

BECK

Guys, it's not even six.

LYNN (ON SCREEN)

Why they call it happy hour!

BECK

I can't go out, I just had the worst day--

PEACH (ON SCREEN)

Whatever it is, Beckalish, we can fix it.

LYNN (ON SCREEN)

Yes us and copious amounts of drinking!

Beck thinks about it. *An idea occurs...* And, determined:

BECK

Do you guys love me?

PEACH/LYNN (ON SCREEN)

Omigod of course/Like a sister/forever

BECK

Then I need you to meet me in Greenpoint.

PEACH/LYNN (ON SCREEN)

Come to us/yeah it's fun where we are.

BECK

There's something I need to do. For myself. I'll text you on my way.

Beck HANGS UP. She reaches into the shower, turns it OFF. As the door shuts, Joe, soaking, finally exhales.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT./INT. STREET OUTSIDE - EVENING

A semi-wet Joe flags down A CAB. He gets in.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I never go to Greenpoint. But the things
you do for love, right?

Joe looks at HIS PHONE and BECK'S TWITTER FEED. Sees:

BECK'S VOICE

*Any girls, boys or other that like poetry
there's an open mic tonight at Mike's
Candy Store. Guess who's sharing?*

JOE

650 Lorimar Street. Brooklyn.

INT. MIKE'S CANDY STORE - NIGHT

The bar is packed. A neo-folk SINGER at the MIC.

Beck is at the bar ordering a drink. We FIND PEACH AND
LYNN sitting a FEW TABLES AWAY. Looking miserable.

PEACH

What is she thinking? She's just going
to embarrass herself. This isn't *Girls*.
These people don't want to listen to a
wannabe writer read a poem about the
bleakness of life or whatever.

LYNN

And all these chips I keep eating. I
feel so fat right now.

REVEAL Joe listening in from the next booth, back to
them, cap pulled low. Eavesdropping.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Your friends are disloyal. And that
amazon, Peach, is the worst. The way she
talks about them to you? As soon as you
leave, she talks about you the same way.

BACK TO THE LADIES --

PEACH

This is about Benji-- She's so desperate for his attention she will willingly go up in front of the most hypercritical crowd in all of Brooklyn-

LYNN

He's so full of himself. The way he says his name like it's French. *BenJeee*.

Beck arrives back at the TABLE with more drinks. She's for sure a little drunk already.

BECK

Another round of picklebacks.

LYNN

You're a mite tipsy.

BECK

That's the idea.

PEACH

Beckish, we sure now's the night?

BECK

Positive. I need to do this. All of my life lately has been about surviving. I need to remind myself why I came here in the first place.

She checks her phone.

PEACH

Why do you keep doing that?

Beck smiles like a child who's gotten busted.

BECK

I invited Benji. What? He likes poetry.

PEACH

Beck.

BECK (CONT'D)

He's coming.

PEACH

He texted he was coming?

BECK

He texted a row of smile emojis like 45 minutes ago.

(cranes her neck)

I... think I see him?

We see what she sees: a tall HIPSTER, from the back.

PEACH

Some guys are assholes and you just have to accept that. You can buy him all the books in the world and he's still gonna be Benji.

BECK

I get it, Peach.

PEACH

You're the one who told me to keep reminding you he's a bastard.

ONSTAGE, the MC reads from the list.

MC

Up next, we have... Guinevere Beck?

Beck rises, a little unsteady, clutching her phone.

BECK

To vulnerability and shit.

Beck downs her drink. Drunk, now. And heads to the stage. Joe steps into shadow, so as not to be spotted.

BECK (CONT'D)

(into mic)

Hey, everyone. I'm Beck, and I'm-- not to sound like, you know, whatever, but just: I'm a poet.

Joe feels for Beck as nerves overtake her. She CLEARS her throat. She reads into the mic FROM HER PHONE:

BECK (CONT'D)

*One day you won't need love anymore.
one day you won't walk through the world
as though it was your job to hold
everything up, the sun, the hard part
of night, the too much, the secret
time when you wake to the sound of
beating. Rise to answer the door for him
but he is not there because that sound is
coming from inside you and you cannot
answer it no matter how far in you go.*

She checks the crowd. No one's listening. The HIPSTER at the bar turns and she sees it's NOT BENJI. This deflates her. She takes a breath, refocuses.

But JOE steps HALF OUT OF THE SHADOWS, transfixed.

BECK (CONT'D)

*You get dressed and put on your sneakers.
You drive to a low building with bright
signs. You order tall drinks. You play
with your food, making mountains.
You watch everything at three a.m.
happening outside the window and it is
all you, it is all you, it is all you and
you will feel this way until you grow out
of it, you will feel this way until you
fall into some sense of the world...*

Joe's frustrated with the AUDIENCE that's paying no attention. One DRUNK MAN HAILS a waitress. A MUSICIAN TUNES his GUITAR. It's eating Beck's confidence, fast.

BECK (CONT'D)

(struggling, now)

*...You loved him the way fragile kids
love gorgeous bullies. You wrote poems
about him. You still write poems about
him. You're writing one right now...*

Beck's FRIENDS CHEER tipsily. Beck loses her place in the poem. She scrolls anxiously--

BECK (CONT'D)

Sorry. My phone went to sleep. Just take a second to find where I was...

The AUDIENCE is LOUDER in their REJECTION NOW. The DRUNK MAN SHOUTS for the next act. Others AGREE. Disaster.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I can't stand seeing this. I'm sorry I just can't. It's obvious what you are...

Joe watches painfully before he finally leaves.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

Joe walks away from the bar, fast. Pulls his coat tight against him, keeping out the night air and the world.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You're blind with love. And what you love-- writing, this city, your friends, and most of all men like Benji, what all those things have in common is *they will never love you back*. While you give everything. Crazy the lengths we go for love. We're a lot alike, Beck. Last of the true romantics...

INT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE STAIRS - LATER

Joe stands, dejected. The station is empty but for him and a HOMELESS MAN, SINGING to himself.

HOMELESS MAN

Engine engine number nine, on the New York transit line....

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I was considering this with my new friend Mr. Insane Homeless Person when the second luckiest thing that happened to me this week happened...

Joe sees A DRUNK, UPSET WOMAN descending the stairs.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Could it really be?

Joe looks a little closer at the DRUNK WOMAN.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

It feels like I'm dreaming.

It's BECK. She's in her own world.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

I'm not.

Joe MOVES behind a PILLAR. Beck walks to the platform.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

You're too drunk to be alone. What if some sicko had followed you down here?

Joe watches Beck. She takes out her PHONE and is DRUNK TEXTING as she STUMBLES a little TOO CLOSE to THE TRACKS.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

And you're too wasted to be standing so close to the tracks.

HOMELESS MAN

Engine engine number nine on the New York Transit line, if my train runs off the track--

Beck throws a glare at the MAN. Moves away. Closer TO THE TRACKS. Then: a new thought that MUST BE TEXTED.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Beck. Stop texting that arrogant, club soda, no show dickhead.

Beck's PHONE PINGS. She LAUGHS at a RESPONSE.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
 You want Benji. You need Benji. You
 hold that phone like it *is Benji* cause
 it's your only means to stay connected.

She begins to TEXT BACK and WALKING as she does. Unaware
 that she's walking... CLOSER TO THE EDGE.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
 Forget Benji and To Hell With That Phone.

Beck goes to pocket her PHONE but it PINGS AGAIN, she
 goes to look at the response and accidentally DROPS IT.

The PHONE FALLS. And SLIDES RIGHT NEXT TO THE EDGE.

Beck bends down to PICK IT UP when SUDDENLY --

HOMELESS MAN
*Engine engine number nine, on the New
 York transit line!!!*

STARTLING HER -- BECK STRAIGHTENS -

And FALLS OFF THE PLATFORM ONTO THE TRACKS WITH A SCREAM!

For a second, Joe stares with such impassivity that we
 expect him to turn and leave her there. When:

BECK (O.C.)
 OH MY GOD! HELP!

Joe looks to the Homeless Man, nervous what to do --

BECK (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 HELP ME! SOMEONE HELP ME!

Joe thinks, then finally races to the edge-- Joe looks
 down-- and BECK, in a total panic, sees him there--

BECK (CONT'D)
 HELP ME, PLEASE--

JOE
 Hey! Stay still. Half that shit down
 there can electrocute you.

She LOOKS DOWN the DARKNESS of THE TUNNEL --

BECK
 A train's coming-- I'm gonna die!

JOE
A train's not coming. You're okay.

HOMELESS MAN
*If my train runs off the track, pick it
up pick it up pick it up!*

BECK
I'm gonna die because of his stupid
fucking singing! That's why I fell!

JOE
Give me your hand.

HOMELESS MAN
*Pick it up pick it up pick
it up!*

JOE
Sir? Please!

Joe lies belly down on the platform, reaches out a hand.

JOE (CONT'D)
You'll be okay. Just take my hand!

HOMELESS MAN
*If my train runs off the
track--*

JOE (CONT'D)
(to the homeless guy)
Sir, shut the fuck up!

BECK
It's coming, I hear it coming--

Now we do hear a train coming. She's right. Shit.

JOE
YOUR HAND. NOW!

Something in Beck snaps lucid. She goes, reaches up--
And Joe PULLS BECK TO SAFETY.

They lie side by side, BREATHING HARD AS --

A TRAIN WHOOSHES BY THEM. Beck's SHAKING.

She pulls herself to a seated position, so close, and
she's LAUGHING and she's CRYING. The train's gone.

Silence. Beck calms. Joe and Beck's eyes meet. And--

She THROWS UP ON HIM.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Outside a 7/11, Joe pours a BOTTLE OF WATER over the vomit on his clothes, cleans himself up with a wad of napkins. Beck watches. More sober and mortified.

BECK

Oh my god, oh my god I'm so sorry--

JOE

It's fine, it's fine-- I hated this jacket.

BECK

(laughs)

I really am sorry.

(then)

You mind?

She grabs the rest of the bottle and drinks it.

JOE

Let's get you in a cab.

Joe eyes the street for a cab.

BECK

I'm not always like this.

JOE

I figured you had some kinda bad night.

BECK

I drank because I have stage fright.

JOE

Actress?

BECK

Writer. Maybe not a writer.

(she looks at him clearly)

I don't want to sound like a stalker but I think I know you.

JOE

I don't--

BECK

The bookstore the other day. Paula Fox.

JOE

Oh-- oh, shit, I'm so sorry, of course!

She pulls her hair out of her face and holds it.

<p>BECK This is what I look like when I'm sober and my hair is up.</p>	<p>JOE (CONT'D) Of course. Yes. I'm sorry.</p>
--	--

BECK
It's okay, I have a pretty bland face.

JOE
No... you don't. And you have good
taste. I remember, *Desperate Characters*.

BECK
Yeah. Also how apt in this particular
moment. What are you doing out this way?

Joe smiles, hails a cab. As it pulls over--

JOE
Visiting some friends. Where you headed?

BECK
Village. You anywhere close? Ride with
me. Least I can do.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Beck and Joe in the backseat. Beck watches the city
through the window, fading from the long night.

BECK
I keep thinking I've reached the pinnacle
of humiliation, and then I top myself.

JOE
I trip and fall all the time. Maybe not
on actual tracks, but that's dumb luck.

BECK
Did you move here to be something? I
did. But it's not working out. And I'm
just running around 18 hours a day in
service of a dream that gets more and
more... like when you look in a window
and you breathe on it so it gets cloudier
and cloudier till you can't even see.
(a frustrated laugh)
I'm sure those words made no sense, said
the alleged writer.

JOE
They made perfect sense.

BECK

I'm like... dancing as fast as I can.
And why? My mom will die not impressed.
My dad already did die. What's it all
built on, a foundation of like hope and
adolescent angst and... never mind.

She looks at him. Then away, a little embarrassed.

BECK (CONT'D)

Sorry.

JOE

Please. I feel the same way sometimes.
This guy I know, owns the bookstore
actually, once told me all books add up
to one essential truth. Which is, if
your IQ is over a certain number, life is
pretty much unbearable. And the number
isn't even that high.

BECK

I do think I'd be happier if I was
stupider.

JOE

But the world would never know your
poetry.

BECK

How'd you know I write poetry?

Fuck. But she's not suspicious, just curious.

JOE

Doesn't every young writer in New York?
I read a lot of poetry.

BECK

Who do you like?

JOE

Mark Strand, Anne Sexton, Merrill...

BECK

You're basically describing my
nightstand.

JOE

If you read those to get to sleep you
definitely belong here.

BECK

It's hard. It's lonely.

JOE

Yeah. It's also expensive.

BECK

Right? I feel like I'm on the verge of becoming some punch-line, you know, casualty of the big bad city--

JOE

Somehow I doubt it.

Their eyes meet. A moment between them. Gently--

BECK

You don't know me.

JOE

I wouldn't say that-- I know a few things. I know how you are in a crisis--

BECK

Yeah, a mess--

JOE

Alive and determined.

(then)

Look, I get it. Pursuing your dreams it's easy to feel like you're just chipping away at an entire glacier. But if you stick with it, there's a moment where the whole thing falls. Give up one chip before that, nothing. Stick it out enough, everything can happen at once.

BECK

I like your thinking, Joe... What was your last name again?

JOE

Goldberg.

She tilts her head to rest on the seat. Closes her eyes.

BECK

Where did you come from Joe Goldberg?

JOE

Grew up here. Left for a little while. Chasing a girl.

BECK

But you came back--

JOE

Missed it. And I'm not a good chaser.

BECK
 (a sleepy smile)
 Me neither...

He's ready to go on, but he realizes she's DOZING OFF.
 Joe watches her. He her head bobs as the car moves.

After a moment, Joe shifts toward her and HER HEAD RESTS
 on HIS SHOULDER. They drive on like that.

INT. CAB - BECK'S STREET - NIGHT

As the cab stops, Beck nods to the building outside.

BECK
 This is me.

JOE
 Bank Street. Not bad.

BECK
 I'm secretly an heiress.
 (then)
 Thanks for sobering me up. And for
 saving my life.

JOE
 I didn't --

BECK
 Yeah, you did.

A beat. Is Beck going to ask Joe up?

JOE'S THOUGHTS
 Ask me up. You want to. Don't worry,
 I'll say no. It's too early...

Just then, a RAP AT BECK'S CAB WINDOW. She jolts. It's
 BENJI. He gives a half-wave.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
 Of course. Benji.

Beck rolls down the window. Joe pulls away a touch.
 Obscuring HIS FACE in the shadows.

BECK
 This is Joe. The guy who literally saved
 my life tonight.

BENJI
 Seriously?

BECK

Yeah, I fell, and he--

BENJI

See, babe, told you people are basically good. Great job, bro.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Bro. You waste of hair.

Benji sticks his HAND in the window for a "high five" with Joe. Joe hesitantly complies.

BENJI

Beck, let's go, it's freezing out here. Thanks again, Joe, gold medal, brother.

Benji heads toward the apartment building. Beck meets Joe's eyes with a slightly embarrassed smile.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

At least you're self-aware enough to be a little ashamed, I guess.

JOE

Maybe I can get your info or --

BECK

Sure. Yeah.

She feels in her pocket for her phone. It's not there. Looks around for it --

BECK (CONT'D)

Shit. My phone --

JOE

You sure it's not in your pocket?

BECK

I must've dropped it in the subway.

JOE

(pulls out his own phone)
Gimme your number, for when you get a replacement.

BECK

Um, I'm mostly enslaved to email.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

(disappointed)
We both know that's not true.

BECK
Becksalot@gmail.

JOE
(types it in)
Alright, Becksalot.

BECK
Thank you. Night, Joe.

Beck pecks Joe on the cheek. And gets out.

EXT. BECK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We see a LIGHT TURN ON in BECK'S WINDOW as she enters with Benji. She's clearly a little mad at Benji for not showing up to the bar.

He tries to nuzzle close. She pushes him away. He looks to be apologizing. Again.

ACROSS THE STREET

Joe is back in his spying spot. Watching.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Here's what I learned this week, Beck.
You're special. You're talented. You're
smart. You're passionate.

FROM JOE'S VOYEUR POV

Beck relents. Benji pulls her to him, kisses her.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Except in the ways you're really not.

BACK WITH JOE

Then REMOVES BECK'S PHONE, with its CRACKED SCREEN, from his pocket. Beck didn't lose it on the tracks after all. We realize Joe must've swiped it in the cab.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
Like not locking your phone.

Joe swipes the phone. It UNLOCKS. Beck's entire life is now open to him. He looks back up to her place...

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
And falling for men like Benji.

FROM JOE'S VOYEUR POV

CLOTHES are COMING OFF as Benji, vape pen dangling from his teeth, moves Beck onto the couch to fuck her.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

The thing that gets me is you know better and you still can't stop. You know he's bad news. You know.

BACK WITH JOE

For a moment longer, Joe forces himself to watch.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

But you can't help it because you have no one and everyone needs someone. And when you need someone you'll reach for anyone.

Then walks away.

EXT. THE STREETS OF NEW YORK - NIGHT

Joe strolls along the avenue. Just a fool in love.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You're inside a house fire. Grabbing for anything in a panic. What you really need is someone *to save you*. From your useless mom, your asshole friends, that douchebag thesis advisor. From Benji.

INT. BECK'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Where Beck and Benji finish having sex. Benji cums and rolls off her. HOLD ON HER FACE, quietly unsatisfied.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I can help, Beck. Let me help you.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. JOE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Joe arrives at his place. The LIGHT in Claudia and Ron's WINDOW is ON but their apartment is SILENT for ONCE. Joe's about to enter when from the SHADOWS he HEARS --

A VOICE (O.S.)
(hushed, nervous)
Joe... Joe...

Joe looks to where PACO stands in the CORNER. SCARED.

JOE
Paco -- what is it?

Paco doesn't move. Joe crosses to him, sees more clearly that Paco LOOKS SHAKEN. He's clearly been CRYING.

PACO
It's Ron. He came home tonight pissed and drunk, like usual. Only my mom's at work and Ron started yelling at me. Saying I thought I was so smart, reading "my books" and looking at him like he's dumb --

JOE
What happened, Paco? Did he hurt you?

PACO
No... he didn't touch me. But he...

Paco looks heartbroken as he lifts the lent COPY of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. It's TORN and TATTERED.

PACO (CONT'D)
I tried to stop him, I promise I tried -

We wonder for a moment what Joe is going to do. Joe looks up at Ron's window then back at Paco. Eerily zen.

JOE
Paco. Paco, it's okay. Come with me.
We'll fix this. Together.

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lights FLICKER ON, revealing the BOMB SHELTER-LIKE basement beneath the shop. Joe and Paco enter. Joe walks to a SUPPLY CLOSET. As he does, he explains:

JOE

The first step to fixing something, Paco, is to know that no matter how destroyed that thing seems, it can always be saved. Books are no exception. Got it?

PACO

Got it.

JOE

Okay. The tools may seem excessive, but usually the more fragile the item the more specific the equipment.

QUICK CUTS as he removes ITEMS, PLACES THEM on a TABLE.

JOE (CONT'D)

C clamps to hold it; drill, drill bits; glue, specifically Poly-Vinyl-Acetate, means no acid to ruin the pages; glue brushes; burlap for the spine; needle, upholstery thread; exacto knife; awl; and finally, right out of Bugs Bunny, a big, trusty *mallet*. Okay, let's get to work.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BENJI'S LOFT - THE NEXT DAY

A live-work space with the trappings of a start-up: cases of Home Soda, HOT ASSISTANTS milling about. BENJI's on a couch next to bud/biz partner JONO, playing A VIDEO GAME. BENJI'S PHONE BUZZES. He checks it. Lights up.

BENJI

Damn! Jono. Listen to this. "Dear Benji, Heard about your soda from acquaintances. Am interested in including you on my fall list of Must Tries. Would love to discuss. Perhaps even try some? Jeff Pevensey."

JONO

That's the dude you're always retweeting?

BENJI

The culture guy for NY Magazine --

JONO (CONT'D)

Hit him back, bro --

BENJI

No shit. Back off while I think.

(as he types)

Jeff, So nice to hear from you, bud. Yeah our sodas are legit.

CUT BACK TO: THE BASEMENT:

THE C-CLAMPS hold THE BOOK in place while JOE DRILLS at the BINDING. MORE CUTS as he REPAIRS the book with the skill of a Swiss Watch Maker. NARRATING as he OPERATES:

JOE

Drill carefully along the spine. Watch your fingers, don't wanna hurt yourself.

CUT BACK TO THE LOFT:

Benji and Jono scour JEFF PEVENSEY'S SITE ONLINE as they await a return email. Benji's PHONES BUZZES AGAIN.

BENJI

"Sounds great, Benji. I would love to meet and sample some flavors. Perhaps with curated plates. I can call between meetings to meet up if you're available."

JONO

Holy shit! This is gonna take us next level. What time you think we'll meet?

BENJI

No offense, Jono, we discussed this, it's best if the product has one clear face in the beginning. That's more just me.

CUT BACK TO THE BASEMENT:

Joe finishes threading the spine of the book. He motions Paco to pull on the string.

JOE

Spine's threaded. I want you to pull the thread as tight as you can, Paco.

Paco pulls. Tight.

CUT TO: A STREET NEAR MOONEY'S:

ON BENJI, walking, ON HIS PHONE, we may notice, he walks right past MOONEY'S RARE AND USED. He has A BOX holding a 12 PACK OF FLAVORS OF HOME SODA under one arm.

Benji, following instructions, turns into AN ALLEY. He looks around, a bit confused, when he SEES

A MAN IN THE DISTANCE. Out of focus. Waving pleasantly.

THE MAN

Benji? It's Jeff!

CUT BACK TO THE BASEMENT:

Joe finishes brushing glue and sets the spine.

JOE

Glue is set. Apply the binder. Now, you can't hesitate, you have to use all your force. We're gonna round the binder to seal everything into place.

Joe lifts the MALLET, SWINGS IT AT THE BINDING. *BANG!*

CUT BACK TO AN ALLEY:

The MAN holds his hand out as Benji approaches. We REALIZE it's JOE dressed in tweeds (remember, Benji never got a good look at him in the cab). They shake.

BENJI

Jeff, nice to meet you, man.

JOE

(indicating the alley)

I know, it's weird, but it was the only office space in the neighborhood. A friend lets me work out of here if I'm in this area. After you.

Joe OPENS THE DOOR to the BASEMENT STAIRS. Benji stands in the doorway-- it's dim, and suddenly, this all feels a little too weird. But he's eager. So Benji enters.

JOE (CONT'D)

Just down and to your left, there.

Benji can't entirely shake the weirdness as he heads down into the basement. After a few STEPS he RECONSIDERS.

BENJI

Hey, man, I'm thinking maybe--

Benji turns to face Joe who is now

HOLDING THE MALLET HE USED TO REPAIR THE BOOK. JOE SWINGS IT HIGH AND BEFORE BENJI CAN REACT WE

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The TING of a SHOP DOORBELL as a customer walks in.

FADE IN:

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED BOOKS - DAY

POV THROUGH SHELVES: a customer enters. We see only a sliver of her... as we track her through the stacks.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

It's two o'clock when the door chimes and I am ready. You told your girlfriends you would come by around this time. I know this because I have your phone.

REVEAL the CUSTOMER is BECK. She walks towards the counter where...

Joe rubs his sore shoulder absently as he sorts receipts. Ethan stacks books nearby.

BECK (O.S.)

Hey.

They both look up. Beck is holding a BROWN BAG. Joe looks surprised. Ethan smiles privately. Looks away.

JOE

Hi...

BECK

Remember me? From almost dying on the train tracks?

JOE

Rings a bell.

BECK

I wanted to thank you.

JOE

You already did.

BECK

Well I wanted to thank you again. And say sorry for running off so, you know, hastily.

JOE

You had a guest.

BECK

(so over Benji)

Hardly.

(subject change; brighter:)

So, I brought you a present.

She hands him the bag.

JOE BECK (CONT'D)
Thanks, you didn't need to-- Shut up, just look at it.

He pulls out... a DAN BROWN NOVEL.

JOE
From a competitor?

BECK
No I actually owned this one. Open it.

He opens it. It's inscribed:

JOE
"Engine engine number nine on the New
York transit line, if your girl falls on
the track, pick her up pick her up pick
her up."

JOE'S THOUGHTS
We already have in jokes.

A beat. They stand there. Joe smiling, friendly but a
little reserved. She's expectant. Finally...

BECK
So... anyway... that. I better...

JOE
Hey, maybe if you're not too busy
sometime we can grab a drink.

BECK
Sure. I still can't find my phone. So --

JOE
I know. Email you.

BECK
That's right. See ya Joe.

Beck smiles and exits with the subtle swagger of a girl
who knows she's wanted. Joe watches her go.

JOE
See you soon, Beck.

As she leaves, Ethan rounds the corner, arms full of
books, to shoot a significant look Joe's way.

ETHAN
Well played, sir.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

I'm not always right. I'm human. I make mistakes all the time, Beck. You'll see.

JOE

I'm gonna deal with the shipment downstairs. Watch the register?

Ethan gives him a nod. Joe heads to the backroom and DOWN THE STAIRS and into--

INT. MOONEY'S RARE AND USED - THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

A series of LOCKS UNLOCK. The DOOR CREAKS OPEN. LIGHTS FLICKER ON.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

Hell, maybe I'm just a fool in love, but I swear I'm right about you, Beck. I know how special you are. And I'm going to help you get the life you deserve.

Joe eyes something in front of him. He's looking at THE CAGE, and more specifically

BENJI, forehead bruised and caked with dried blood, sitting huddled in the corner. Locked in.

BENJI

Please... whatever you think I've done, I haven't. You have the wrong person.

JOE

(quietly)
No I don't.

Benji shuts up. He's terrified of Joe. Joe smiles.

JOE'S THOUGHTS

You're welcome, Beck. See you soon.

SNAP TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT